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COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY NOTE**

Pacific island countries

SUMMARY

The Executive Director presents the programme strategy note for the Pacific island countries for a programme of cooperation for the period 1997 to 2001.

The programme of cooperation includes the already established or evolving National Coordination Committees for Children in 13 Pacific countries, which are developing and implementing national programmes of action (NPAs) for children. UNICEF cooperation increasingly is responding to country-specific situations and highlighting the need for disaggregated data and improved monitoring systems in the region.

The cooperation will have two general objectives: (a) to continue to facilitate the development, implementation and monitoring of NPAs and the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and (b) to sustain achievement of national goals through promotion of the Convention. Four programme components - social mobilization, health and nutrition, education and monitoring will provide the framework of the cooperation. Appropriate mixes of the components will be developed to help each country support its priority goals. It is essential that there be increased sustainability of many current activities if achievements in child survival are to be maintained. Social mobilization will extend beyond the "young child" and address youth and women's issues. Greater coordination with non-governmental organizations, regional organizations and institutions and United Nations agencies, particularly in assisting countries with child monitoring, will be key to ensuring the complementarity of UNICEF cooperation with that of other donor partners in the region.

* E/ICEF/1996/2.

** An addendum to the present report containing the final country programme recommendation will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its third regular session of 1996.

THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN

1. The Pacific island countries consist of 21 sovereign, highly diverse States and dependent Territories, and UNICEF has programmes of cooperation with 13 of these countries. Basic indicators of children's well-being differ across the region. Infant mortality rates range from 12 per 1,000 live births in Niue to 65 in Kiribati. Under-five mortality rates (U5MRs) range from 12 per 1,000 live in Niue to 92 in Kiribati. School enrolment rates range from 56 per cent in the Solomon Islands to between 90 and 100 per cent in most other countries. Some data are not available and other are not disaggregated. Analysis of trends is difficult because child survival indicators are improving in some countries. In Fiji, U5MR dropped from 33 per 1,000 live births in 1986 to 28 in 1993. However, natural disasters, weak economies and significant reliance on external aid present challenges to sustaining progress.

2. Many Pacific island countries are experiencing socio-cultural transformations, and the introduction of cash economies has caused some strains on families and island communities. Combined with urbanization, there are emerging social and economic inequities, including urban and peri-urban poverty. The quality of education is inadequate. Early childhood care and education are needed to help prepare children for the difficult transition to primary school. High school drop-out rates and high levels of juvenile crime, alcohol and drug abuse, teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) (including hepatitis B) and youth suicide all signal low self-esteem and alienation among many young people.

3. Immunization is almost universal, but there are remaining pockets of poor coverage, vitamin A deficiency and iodine deficiency disorders. In the Marshall Islands, Kiribati and the Federated States of Micronesia, for example, severe vitamin A deficiency affected, respectively, up to 8, 14 and 20 per cent of young children. Polio has almost been eradicated from the Pacific, but measles outbreaks are common.

4. Diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections (ARI) also kill many children. The use of oral rehydration therapy is encouraged, but the level of use is unknown. There has been a decline in breast-feeding in urban areas. Maternal mortality is high in some countries because of inadequate child spacing, anaemia, lack of access to safe delivery facilities and malaria. There is a lack of sanitation facilities and access to safe water. UNICEF cooperation will focus on selected high-priority problems of survival, development and protection in each country.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM PAST COOPERATION

5. The Pacific island cooperation includes 13 established or evolving National Coordination Committees for Children (NCCCs), which are developing and implementing national programmes of action (NPAs) for children and working towards ratification, implementation and reporting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. NPAs are based largely on the goals of the World Summit for Children, which were endorsed by the South Pacific Forum and South Pacific Commission along with additional regional goals, including the control of vector-borne diseases, life skills education, the prevention of HIV/AIDS and STDs and support for the role of family. Each country focuses on the goals most relevant to its own situation. Because UNICEF cooperation is responding

increasingly to country-specific goals, improved child monitoring will be required.

6. Recommendations of mid-term reviews and strategy meetings focused on the need to continue the current framework of activities in the areas of child health, nutrition, education and social mobilization. The reviews indicated the need for the programme to address such new challenges as women's health, community empowerment and the needs of youth, including reproductive health and youth participation. The cooperation has focused successfully on social mobilization and capacity-building through training and building of effective partnerships at country and regional levels. The supply component should continue to decrease.

7. Priorities for improvement include stronger initiatives to translate government policies into increased resource allocations to social sector programmes and implementation of programmes to achieve stated goals. All of the independent countries have signed or ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is clearly recognized, however, that all partners need to focus more deliberately on improving weak monitoring systems as part of implementing and monitoring the Convention. UNICEF advocacy related to the Convention has introduced such new elements as child abuse, juvenile justice and other issues facing youth.

8. Building on partnerships with other United Nations agencies, regional and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and regional organizations and institutions will be key to refining the future role of UNICEF cooperation. Programmes should complement those of other donors and mobilize more government and community partners.

PROPOSED COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY

9. All countries have identified the Convention on the Rights of the Child as the framework for planning their programme activities. The cooperation will build increasingly on regional initiatives to address the goals of the World Summit for Children and concerns raised by the Convention in an integrated way.

10. The cooperation will have two general objectives: (a) to continue to facilitate the development, implementation and monitoring of national programmes for children and families, leading towards realization of the rights of children; and (b) to sustain national achievements through promotion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The specific objectives are to:

(a) Identify and advocate actions on priority issues affecting children's well-being at all levels of society, based on more reliable data and analysis;

(b) Strengthen with Governments, NGOs, communities and families the monitoring of indicators related to the survival, development and protection of their children;

(c) Establish and strengthen decentralization of island-level programmes and community-based participation to plan and manage child-focused development activities, including the participation of children;

(d) Support the development of innovative approaches to child and youth survival, development, protection and participation;

(e) Sustain and increase collaboration with and strengthen partnerships among United Nations agencies, regional organizations and institutions and NGOs working on high-priority children's issues.

11. Building more sustainability into current child survival activities will be essential to protect achievements. The role of NCCCs, as well as social mobilization, will be vital as Governments increasingly assume responsibility for providing resources to sustain and build on these achievements. Thus, a key strategy will be to improve planning and the deployment of resources. The programme in each country will be based on support for one or two crucial and relevant goals for that country.

12. Where most goals have been achieved, for example, in the Cook Islands, Niue, Palau, Tokelau and Tonga, UNICEF cooperation will focus on child advocacy programmes and assist NCCCs in child monitoring and the preparation and implementation of NPAs. In such countries as Western Samoa, Tuvalu and Fiji, even with overall progress towards the goals, some priorities need continued support, e.g. nutrition. Five priority countries require continued support for child survival issues, i.e., control of diarrhoeal disease (CDD) and ARI, malaria (Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) and reduction of malnutrition, including vitamin A deficiency (Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia and Marshall Islands). Education and water supply and sanitation are also important in many of these countries.

13. There will be four programme components. In social mobilization, the objectives will be to (a) continue to advocate the implementation and monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; (b) support research, advocacy, information and community mobilization efforts for youth participation; (c) assist in reducing school drop-outs, STDs, teenage pregnancies and substance abuse; and (d) gather baseline data to identify measurable objectives. More attention will be paid to legal frameworks for children through analysis and advocacy with legislators, lawyers and law enforcement agencies. Social mobilization will extend beyond "the young child" and address broader youth issues. UNICEF will collaborate with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), as follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development, to promote the dissemination of information on reproductive health.

14. The objectives for health and nutrition will be to continue to assist countries to achieve and sustain the goals of the World Summit for Children and regional goals. In the areas of immunization, ARI, CDD, breast-feeding, nutrition, water supply and environmental sanitation and, where applicable, malaria control, the key strategies to support service delivery will be community education, school health education and social mobilization. Capacity-building will include training as well as some supply assistance. A focus on women's reproductive health will be introduced. The empowerment of women and communities will be facilitated so they can take more responsibility for their own health care and needs. The strengthening of partnerships with NGOs and other agencies, e.g. UNFPA and the World Health Organization (WHO), will be crucial.

15. The objective of the education component will be to strengthen the preparation of children to participate in primary education. The cooperation will continue to support the growth of the preschool education movement through the establishment of regional and national formal and non-formal training programmes. The current cooperation in early childhood care and education and basic education will continue, building on the components for community participation and literacy. Continued collaboration with other agencies,

including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the University of the South Pacific should strengthen the quality of basic education.

16. UNICEF will support NCCCs in following children's issues related to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the goals of the World Summit for Children. A principal theme for advocacy will be greater cooperation among agencies and improved quality of monitoring, e.g. disaggregation of data by age and gender, to enable partner agencies to better target programmes to vulnerable groups. UNICEF will collaborate with such regional partners as the South Pacific Commission, the University of the South Pacific, NGOs and other United Nations agencies, especially UNFPA, WHO and the United Nations Development Programme, to support Governments in strengthening national and regional monitoring.

ESTIMATED PROGRAMME BUDGET

Estimated programme cooperation, 1997-2001 a/
(In thousands of United States dollars)

	General resources	Supplementary funds	Total
Pacific island cooperation	7 000	14 000	21 000

a/ These are indicative figures only which are subject to change once aggregate financial data are finalized.